

Appendix—China Rural Household Survey

China's rural household survey (RHS), conducted annually by China National Bureau of Statistics, Rural Survey Organization (RSO), is a rich source of information on household consumption patterns. Unlike many surveys that record food purchases over a few weeks or rely on respondent recall, the RHS collects consumption, purchase, and expenditure data using diaries kept over the course of an entire year.

The survey is designed to monitor growth in income and living standards and evaluate progress in China's efforts to alleviate poverty by collecting detailed information on the production, exchange, consumption, asset accumulation, and social activities of a national sample of rural residents. Data are used for rural policymaking at all levels of government and for compiling national economic accounts.

The survey collects data from 68,000 households in about 9,000 villages of 857 counties selected from the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities using a complex multistage stratified sampling method. A representative sample of counties is chosen from each province, and sample villages are selected from the counties. A stratified sample of households is chosen from each of the sample villages. Stratification is based on per capita net income, supplemented by population. The sample is representative at the national and provincial levels. The sample of households is systematically rotated over a 5-year cycle.

The RHS collects information on 1,000 items, including (1) village-level characteristics, (2) basic household information, (3) production and sales, (4) total income, expenditure, and net income, (5) total cash income and cash expenditure, (6) grain balance, and (7) food consumption. Expenditure categories are shown in appendix table 1.

Respondents record all economic activities (production, purchases, sales, consumption) in a diary over the course of the entire year. Respondent households record both cash and in-kind transactions. Local assistant enumerators periodically visit households to record, check, and organize the diary book and to assist illiterate respondents. County interviewers often go to villages to supervise the recording, to provide guidance or help, and to collect the diary books periodically. At the end of each calendar year, interviews are arranged to collect community information, data on individuals, and some additional household information such as fixed asset ownership.

After the diary records are coded, the data are entered into a computer and checked in the county survey branch. County survey branches send data diskettes to provincial organizations and then to RSO in Beijing. RSO and provincial organizations check, aggregate, and tabulate the data. Tabulations of the data are published in annual and quarterly statistical reports and in research papers.

Information about consumption and expenditures are collected in detail through recording the quantity and purchase price, family consumption, and

durable goods owned at year-end. Average selling prices are used to impute the value of in-kind consumption. Consumption information is classified into eight aspects: food; clothing; residence; household facilities, articles and services; medicines and medical services; transport and post-telecommunication services; cultural, educational, recreational articles and services; and other commodities and services. Consumption expenditure refers to the outlay during the survey period. The survey records actual expenditure for purchasing houses, housing material, and durable consumer goods rather than imputed rent.